

Appendix B

Summary of Public Comments

INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes public comments received by SPO staff via public meetings and written materials. The first portion of this appendix reproduces the letters received commenting on the April 2000 Draft of this Plan Review and Evaluation, followed by a brief overall response to the themes expressed in the written comments.

The second portion of this appendix summarizes verbal comments from a scoping meeting for this evaluation held in January 2000, and a prior set of citizen comments from late 1999.

WRITTEN COMMENTS ON DRAFT PLAN REVIEW/EVALUATION, APRIL, 2000

SPO received six comment letters from public individuals and groups; these letters are reproduced in the next several pages. Commenters included:

- Maple Leaf Community Council
- Mullally Development Company
- Faye Garneau
- Sue Geving
- Thomas Heller
- Joel Tufel

Some of the major themes we have heard through this evaluation process are:

- There is great interest in determining how the City will strive to further implement the Northgate Plan, through public sector planning efforts and influence on private development activities.
- How can the competing aims of the Plan – accommodation of denser growth and promotion of a more humane pedestrian-oriented environment – be realistically achieved?
- The City could better enforce the requirements and policies in the Northgate Plan and Land Use Code to address citizen concerns about design, aesthetic quality, traffic impacts, pedestrian and open space amenity needs, drainage and environmental quality. Also, the City could improve its follow-through in implementation efforts.
- There is concern from both citizen and business interests that regulatory processes be functional and responsible. Many citizens seek greater recognition of resident

concerns in regulatory and planning processes, while business interests generally seek more reliable, efficient and timely regulatory processes.

The Plan Review and Evaluation has been updated and revised, in a relatively limited manner, to respond to comments and changes in existing conditions. The changed conditions include: the decision on the appeal of the Mall GDP to Superior Court; the delay of Commercial Master Plan regulations (that were discussed as a possible alternative to GDP regulations); and preliminary efforts to amend GDP regulations in the Land Use Code.

Just as there is a wide variety of interests in different aspects of the urban area, there is a wide range of opinion as to the best course for encouraging and realizing the goals of the 1993 Northgate Plan. Many opinions were expressed and helped shape the Plan when it was originally prepared in the early 1990s. There will be many ongoing opportunities to participate in further planning and implementation efforts in the coming years, including station area planning, neighborhood plan implementation efforts by DON, utilities and public facilities planning efforts.

Many, perhaps most, of the issues raised by citizen comments will require ongoing dialogue regarding what further actions should be taken. Few of these issues have clear-cut solutions, but the evaluation offers a variety of strategies to improve certain specific weaknesses as well as the overall implementation of the Northgate Plan. It will be the responsibility of City decisionmakers and staff to provide leadership and expertise and make wise choices.

PLAN REVIEW/EVALUATION REPORT SCOPING MEETING, JAN. 12, 2000

At this meeting, the attendees included several of the original planning committee members for the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan, and several citizens representing various neighborhoods in the vicinity. The purpose of the meeting was to receive feedback on the proposed report outline prepared by SPO staff, to help inform preparation of the five-year evaluation report. The following summarizes individual comments, grouped into topics relevant to the Plan.

Comments on Status of Plan and Citizen Interests

- There was interest that the evaluation highlight omissions and weaknesses of the Plan, and weaknesses in other City codes and policies. If it is determined that the Plan has not led to the desired outcomes, this should lead to a point where citizens and the City can consider changes to the Plan.
- Some citizens expressed distrust of the City and dissatisfaction with DCLU's ability to ignore public comments in regulating new development, especially as it relates to implementing the Plan.
- There was concern that this review would be used as a way to water down or defeat the intent of the Plan.
- A business community representative and original planning committee member expressed interest in having a minority report from the original Plan considered in this evaluation. The minority report expresses opinions sympathetic to business interests and viability of future business/economic development of the Northgate area. The slow pace of commercial development activity was felt to be a result of the Plan's level of regulation.
- Citizens were interested in being able to contribute comments and recommendations to this evaluation process.
- There was some uncertainty as to the intended timeframe of the Plan, whether it expires in 2001, or extends until construction of a light rail/high-capacity transit station.
- During the discussion, opinions expressed by most original planning committee members tended to emphasize the long process of preparing the original Plan and building consensus. People with this viewpoint generally supported retaining the Plan in its current form, or at least not making radical changes to the overall intent of the Plan.

Comment on Evaluation Topics

Data on Residential and Commercial Development Activity

- Responding to employment information, citizens expressed interest in learning about the Northgate area's economic contribution to the City's tax base, whether that has changed over time, and the implications for achieving economic goals for the city.
- One citizen expressed interest in understanding the average income level of the area, especially as this might relate to future opportunities for seeking various grants tied to socioeconomic conditions and station area planning. It was noted that the definition of the planning area boundary might influence the overall socioeconomic profile.
- Regarding housing information, citizens expressed interest in the breakdown in multifamily units of apartments, condominiums, and senior housing, and to understand how much demolition occurred.
- Regarding commercial development, citizens wanted sufficient detail to distinguish between built projects and projects still under review, and implications of the development data for the Plan.
- Some citizens were interested in including population data in the analysis, to augment the discussion on residential development.

Land Use

- There was concern from some citizens that the boundaries of the planning area have been drawn in a way that takes in too much peripheral area to the east and north/northeast, and not enough area to the west and south. It was suggested that the prospective rail station location should be the midpoint of the area, with a radius of ½ mile or appropriate distance from the station. Possible changes of the boundary were suggested.
- Original planning committee members noted the original emphasis of the plan on traffic and land use matters, and the requirement that they address matters only in the defined planning area, not adjacent areas. Similarly, the Aurora-Licton Neighborhood Plan was noted as not being allowed to address matters in the Northgate area.
- The analysis should comment on whether transit-oriented development (e.g., new higher density development in proximity to transit facilities that would promote transit use) or mixed use development is occurring in Northgate, and why this has or has not occurred. In addition, the analysis could compare graphically the locations where growth was intended versus where it has occurred.
- The analysis should discuss how terminology of some planning concepts has changed (such as Green Streets and Pedestrian Streets), and how this may have affected implementation of these features.

- The Planning Commission representative noted the commission's interest in understanding how the Plan relates to implementation of the transit station and library projects. This could also help inform how everyone can cooperatively work to implement future amenities and improvements.
- There was concern that DCLU's SEPA environmental reviews do not consider possible environmental impacts in enough depth, and furthermore, that SEPA authority has not been used enough to regulate development proposals. This comment was directed specifically at the review of the Northgate Mall General Development Plan.
- Some citizens were interested in having the knowledge gained from the new commercial master planning process being developed by DCLU to be applied positively to the General Development Plan process.

Transportation

- The effects of commercially-generated traffic cutting through neighborhoods should be analyzed.
- The transportation impacts of the Mall GDP and Touchstone developments should be discussed.
- The likely impacts of transit system cuts from I-695 should be discussed.
- The reliance of aging populations on transit was noted.
- The need for a transit circulator/shuttle bus or van system was indicated as critical, to help "make the community whole."
- Some citizens were interested in the deficiencies of the Plan with respect to pedestrian and bicycling issues. The insufficiency of the Plan's sidewalk and pedestrian requirements to creating an environment conducive to pedestrians was noted. The perceived conflict in the Plan of accommodating automobile traffic as well as seeking pedestrian orientation was noted. The lack of thorough planning for bicycle accommodation was noted.

Other Topics

- There was interest in understanding how the City and community can find ways to move forward with improvements to meet infrastructure goals, including street improvements, sidewalks, utilities and similar features.
- There was interest in discussion about the natural environment: how it has fared since Plan adoption, and how it fits into the Plan. Aspects of this topic include habitat values, human enjoyment, and environmental habitat and enhancement. Plan elements related to open space and drainage were noted. Thornton Creek and wetlands in the Licton Springs area were noted as some of the resources.

- Some citizens noted interest in drainage issues as they pertain to Thornton Creek and other natural resources. Related to this is an interest in discussing opportunities for infiltration of drainage rather than routing to Thornton Creek.
- The analysis should include a section discussing implications for City actions: how to get things done, and what may need to change in terms of the City's planning and implementation activities.
- One citizen was interested in whether an updated inventory of community facilities could be provided.